

# What You Need to Know About National Health Service Corps Recruitment Assistance



The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) is dedicated to improving the health of people living in underserved areas of the Nation. Since 1972, the NHSC has delivered a primary care workforce of more than 23,000 committed, compassionate, and qualified health care professionals to communities in need.

## **How does the NHSC recruit clinicians?**

The NHSC conducts extensive recruitment activities nation-wide to identify those students and clinicians with the commitment and desire to serve in areas of greatest need. These activities include exhibiting at national conferences, direct mailings, print advertisements, and via the internet through a strategic web marketing plan. Information specialists staffing the NHSC help-line collect information about the students or clinicians, including date available for service, and the states where they are interested in practicing. This information is disseminated to recruiters and communities across the country looking for community-responsive, culturally competent primary care health professionals.

## **What disciplines does the NHSC recruit?**

Through the Scholarship Program the NHSC recruits students who are training to become primary care physicians (MDs and DOs), family nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, physician assistants and dentists. These students are selected to receive a scholarship based on their commitment to serve in underserved areas as a career choice, wherever the needs are the greatest. Upon completion of their health professions training, NHSC Scholars become available for placement at sites that qualify for NHSC recruitment and retention assistance. This unique group of individuals serves where the needs are the greatest in communities across the Nation.

Through the Loan Repayment Program (LRP), the NHSC helps communities recruit: primary care physicians (MDs and DOs), primary care nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, and psychiatric nurse specialists.

## **How does the NHSC determine which sites are eligible for Scholars/Loan Repayors?**

NHSC Scholars and Loan Repayors serve in federally designated health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) of greatest need. These sites are located nationwide in rural, frontier and urban settings.

## **How is community need determined?**

Need is determined by using the HPSA designation score. The higher the HPSA score, the greater the need. Therefore, sites with the highest HPSA scores have a better chance of recruiting a NHSC Scholar or Loan Repayor. Sites with lower HPSA scores should not be discouraged from joining the NHSC. The amount of funding available for the NHSC LRP, and the number of Scholars available for placement are key variables that impact a site's ability to utilize the NHSC LR or Scholarship programs to recruit a clinician. The NHSC can also provide technical assistance on how to utilize the various disciplines we have available to further enhance a site's recruitment activities. The benefits to working with the NHSC go beyond recruiting a NHSC Scholar or Loan Repayor. A vacancy posting on our web site will be seen by thousands of health professionals looking to work in underserved areas. Not all of these clinicians are NHSC Scholars or potential Loan Repayors.

## **What impact does the new Health Care Safety Amendments (P. L. 107-251) of 2002, reauthorizing the NHSC, have on sites?**

In October 2002, President Bush signed the "Health Care Safety Net Amendments" legislation, which reauthorizes and strengthens the National Health Service Corps. As a result of this legislation, all Section 330 funded community health centers (including migrant, homeless, and public housing), as well as non-funded but certified Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics (RHCs) that meet the NHSC charges for services requirements will be considered as HPSAs.

Since these sites are now deemed a HPSA, they would be eligible to submit a NHSC Recruitment & Retention (R&R) Assistance application to the NHSC. If their R&R Assistance application is approved, these sites would be eligible to post vacancies on the NHSC Opportunities List to assist them in their recruiting efforts. It is important to note that sites that were not considered a HPSA prior to the Health Care Safety Net Amendments may have a minimal HPSA score, making them a very low priority for placement of NHSC Scholars or potential loan repayors. These sites may submit data to obtain a HPSA score that more accurately reflects the degree of need in a given HPSA and enhances the sites' opportunity to qualify as an approved practice site for a NHSC Scholar, or to compete for a potential loan repayer. Sites in previously designated HPSAs may use the scores of these areas.

The legislation also authorizes a demonstration project to allow for participation of pharmacists and chiropractors in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program. The NHSC is reviewing these and all other applicable provisions of the new legislation and is developing policies, procedures, and application materials to allow for their timely implementation. Updated information will be posted on the NHSC Web site as it becomes available.

## **How do clinicians find out about our vacancies?**

The on-line NHSC Opportunities List posts information on sites and their recruitment needs. The NHSC Opportunities List can be found on our Web site at <http://www.nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>. **A posting on the NHSC Opportunities List does not guarantee a NHSC Scholar placement or LRP contract award.**

## **When is the best time to apply and/or post a vacancy?**

Hundreds of NHSC Scholars and potential loan repayors will begin their employment searches in the summer and fall. By completing the NHSC R&R application now, you may request support from the NHSC any time throughout the year, as long as your HPSA designation is in place. When you are ready to recruit clinical staff, notify the NHSC of your needs. Your vacancy and important information about your site and community will be posted on our web site for use by not only NHSC Scholars and potential loan repayors, but by thousands of dedicated clinicians visiting our web site.

You should note that, the due date to submit an application or vacancy request to the NHSC to be considered for the NHSC LRP in fiscal year 2003 is March 28, 2003 (postmark date). Applications or vacancy requests postmarked after March 28, 2003 are still accepted, but would not be eligible for NHSC LRP for clinicians in fiscal year 2003 (fiscal years run from October 1 to September 30).

## **How does our site request NHSC recruitment assistance?**

Simply complete the 2-page NHSC R&R Assistance application to apply. Eligibility requirements as well as the R&R Assistance application can be obtained by calling the NHSC toll-free help line below, or downloaded from the NHSC Web site at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov> under the "Applications" section.

## **Do all clinicians that take employment at a site on the NHSC Opportunities List receive loan repayment if they submit an NHSC LRP application by the due date?**

No. The NHSC LRP is a competitive program. However, there is good news -- due to a proposed increase in funding the NHSC LRP hopes to fund more awards than ever this year. Get your application in today!

National Health Service Corps

1-800-221-9393

<http://www.nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>